

## Background: Statue of Zeus

### Background information:

The Statue of Zeus at Olympia was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It truly was a wonder to behold. The building itself, designed in 450 B.C. by the architect Libon, was as tall as a modern four-story building, and the statue filled most of it. Zeus's head nearly brushed the ceiling, he was so tall. The noted geographer Strabo once commented that if Zeus were to come to life and stand up, "he would unroof the temple."



The statue was made of ivory, a gleaming symbol of the Greeks' reverence for the head of the gods. Zeus wore a robe and jewels made of gold; also made of gold were the sandals he wore. The throne on which Zeus sat was made of cedar wood and was inlaid with ebony, ivory, gold, and jewels. Zeus held in his left hand a shining scepter, on top of which an eagle perched, ready to take off at any moment and do the god's bidding. In Zeus's left hand rested a statue of goddess of victory Nike.

The monument was carved by Phidias, considered the greatest Greek sculptor. Phidias it was who also designed the overpowering statue of Athena that stood in the Parthenon and other, smaller, statues at such landmarks as Marathon and Plataea.

The statue of Zeus at Olympia was completed by 435 B.C. It lasted as an inspiration to and destination for thousands for many years. It resisted many attempts to usurp its authority in the eyes of its visitors. The Roman Emperor Caligula, jealous of its power over his newly conquered "citizens," ordered it moved to Rome. The scaffolding attached to the statue collapsed, accompanied by, according to legend, a loud laughing noise. The temple and statue survived earthquakes and other natural disasters until it was uprooted and carted off to Constantinople, in A.D. 394. It was lost in an accidental fire in 462.



A few columns of this famous landmark have been uncovered during 19th and 20th Century archaeological digs, but that is all that remains of the once magnificent statue.

See also :

<http://7wonders.mrdonn.org/zeus.html>

<http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/7ancientwonders.htm>

**Yarn:**

## **Zeus and his Mighty Company**

A long time ago, when the world was much younger than it is now, people told and believed a great many wonderful stories about incredible things which neither you nor I have ever seen. They often talked about a god called Zeus, who was king of the sky and the earth; and they said that he sat most of the time amongst the clouds on the top of a very high mountain where he could look down and see everything that was going on in the earth beneath. He liked to ride on the storm-clouds and hurl burning thunderbolts right and left among the trees and rocks, and he was so very, very mighty that when he nodded, the earth quaked, the mountains trembled and smoked, the sky grew black, and the sun hid his face. Zeus had two brothers, both of them terrible and great, but not nearly as great as Zeus himself. The name of one of them was Poseidon, and he was the king of the sea. He had a glittering, golden palace far down in the deep sea-caves where the fishes live and the red coral grows, and whenever he was angry the waves would rise mountain high, and the storm-winds would howl fearfully, and the sea would try to break over the land. The other brother was a sad, pale-faced being, whose kingdom was underneath the earth, where the sun never shone and where there was darkness and weeping and sorrow all the time. His name was Hades, and his country was called the Lower World, or the Land of Shadows. Men said that whenever anyone died, Hades would send his messenger to carry him down into his cheerless kingdom; and for that reason they never spoke well of Hades, but were scared of him and thought of him as the enemy of life.

A great number of other gods lived with Zeus amid the clouds on the mountain top - so many that I can name only a few. There was Aphrodite, the queen of love and beauty, who was fairer by far than any woman that you or I have ever seen. There was Athena, the queen of the air, who gave people wisdom and taught them how to do many useful things. There was Hera, the queen of earth and sky, who sat at the right hand of Zeus and gave him all kinds of advice. There was Ares, the great warrior, who delighted in battle. There was Hermes, the swift messenger, who had wings on his cap and shoes, and who flew from place to place like the summer clouds when they are driven before the wind. And besides these, there were many others about whom you will learn soon enough, and about whom are told strange and beautiful stories. They lived in glittering, golden mansions, high up among the clouds - so high that the eyes of humans could never see them. But they could look down and see what humans were doing, and often they were said to leave their lofty homes and wander unknown across the land or over the sea. And of all these mighty folk, Zeus was by far the mightiest.

So a temple was built in his honor at Olympia, in a sacred grove between two rivers, from where he could watch over the Olympic games held every four years. The Olympic Games originated long ago in ancient Greece. The Games were a direct outgrowth of the values and beliefs of Greek society. The Greeks idealized physical fitness and mental discipline, and they believed that excellence in those areas honored Zeus, the greatest of all their gods.

Around 432 BC, Greece's most famous sculptor, Phidias, travelled to Olympia to begin work on a statue of Zeus that would become the fourth wonder of the world. He set up a workshop next to the temple and spent the next 12 years completing the project. When finished, the statue was amazing. Zeus was depicted sitting on his throne. He was over 40 feet high and his head almost brushed the roof of the temple. Some people thought that Phidias had got the proportions wrong, as the temple was believed to be Zeus's actual home and it looked as though he would take the roof off if he stood up, but others thought it made the god even more awe-inspiring.

The throne was 22 feet wide and made from cedar wood, inlaid with precious stones and decorated with gold, ivory, and ebony carvings of lesser gods, heroes, and mystical animals. Zeus himself was made from a wooden frame that was covered with pieces of ivory and bronze. The god's skin was polished ivory, his hair, beard, robes, and sandals gold. In his right hand he held a life-size statue of Nike, the winged goddess of victory, while in his left was an eagle-headed sceptre, made from rare metals and jewels. Two golden lions supported the stool under his feet.



A pool was created in front of his feet, filled with olive oil that was used to anoint the ivory, to prevent it cracking in the humid Olympian climate. This pool may also have served to reflect light onto the statue.

According to Pausanias, a Greek traveller, Phidias asked Zeus for a sign that he approved of the finished statue. Zeus, who was in charge of thunder and lightning, apparently obliged by striking the temple with a thunderbolt that caused no damage. Zeus again showed his power when, during the first century CE, Emperor Caligula tried to have the statue moved to Rome. According to legend, the scaffolding erected around the statue fell down to the sound of god-like laughing.

Archaeological research has found the outline of the temple, oil pool, Phidias's workshop, and fragments from the temple itself, but of Zeus, king of the gods, nothing.

<b>Playacting:</b>	<b>What is the Brand?</b>
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Brand names which can be used for playacting:

	<b>MARMITE</b>
	<b>SPUR</b>

	<b>COKE</b>
	<b>BLACK CAT PEANUT BUTTER</b>
	<b>BAR ONE</b>
	<b>CORN FLAKES</b>
	<b>KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN</b>
	<b>BARNEY</b>
	<b>TOYOTA</b>
	<b>WIMPY</b>
	<b>OROS</b>